

Istook Praises School Prayer Petition Effort

Washington, D.C. - Tomorrow, the U.S. House will vote for the first time since 1971 on a constitutional amendment to restore voluntary school prayer and safeguard religious freedoms. Today, petitions with more than a million signatures in favor of such an amendment were delivered to the lawn of the U.S. Capitol.

This is in addition to another million signatures delivered several months ago.

The latest set of petitions were circulated by Christian singer and entertainer Carman as he toured the country. Congressman Ernest Istook, (R-OK), author of the Religious Freedom Amendment scheduled for Thursday's vote, said the petitions reflect the will of the American people.

"When the vote is called tomorrow, we'll find out whether the House of Representatives responds to what the American people want," Istook said. "It's incredible when you consider that only one man collected these signatures. This helps prove the huge importance of this effort to the American people.

The singer said the more than one million signers of the petition are concerned about children facing skyrocketing problems such as violence and teen pregnancy.

"These are people that want to see God put back into the classroom, and I'm here today to stand up for that which is right," Carman said. "On Thursday, the House casts a vote to decide whether they support children who slay, or children who pray."

Istook praised Carman for his efforts and dedication in the pursuit of religious freedom and restoring prayer.

"These petitions prove once again that the public has never accepted the Supreme Court's decisions, beginning over 35 years ago, restricting the public practice of prayer and religion. National polls conducted by Gallup, Harris, Newsweek, Time, the television networks, and many others for decades have shown clear, unwavering support for reversing the damage that has been done to our First Amendment."

"Since that first ruling in 1962, as prayer has gone out of schools, guns, knives, drugs and gangs have come in. It's time we put the emphasis on what we believe, and almost every American believes in God."

Istook noted that several of the controversial Supreme Court decisions which the RFA will correct were decided by narrow 5-4 margins. **"Our Constitution wisely gives us a way to fix it when the Supreme Court goes astray, and fails to correct its mistakes. That is what the Religious Freedom Amendment does."**

TEXT OF THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AMENDMENT

"To secure the people's right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience: Neither the United States nor any State shall establish any official religion, but the people's right to pray and to recognize their religious beliefs, heritage or traditions on public property, including schools, shall not be infringed. Neither the United States nor any state shall require any person to join in prayer or other religious activity, prescribe school prayers, discriminate against religion, or deny equal access to a benefit on account of religion."

More information can be found at the website: <http://religiousfreedom.house.gov>